

MEMORANDUM

TO: Superintendents, Regional CTE Directors, Independent School Heads Offering State Approved CTE Programs

FROM: Daniel French, Secretary of Education *DF*

SUBJECT: Use of ESSER Funds to Support Regional CTE Centers

DATE: July 13, 2021

Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance and clarifications related to the use of Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) I, II and III funds to support regional career technical education (CTE) centers, to confirm the permissibility of use of funds to support students participating in the flexible pathway of CTE, and to encourage supervisory unions and districts (SU/SDs) to assist regional CTE centers in mitigating the effects of the pandemic for Vermont students.

Considerations

Vermont's CTE centers are shared regional resources. They depend on support from the SU/SDs that host them as well as from the SU/SDs that send students to them. To date, Vermont's CTE centers have collectively received \$4,882,021 in Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds and Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act funds. During the 2020-2021 school year, these funds were used to support individual technical center needs so that CTE programs could continue to be delivered to students and comply with the guidance from the Agency of Education and the Department of Health. Vermont's LEAs have received \$398,957,151 in ESSER I, II and III funds.

ESSER funds may be used to support career technical education, and in particular, activities authorized by Perkins V, per the US Department of Education's [May 2021 FAQ](#) on ESSER Programs. A non-exhaustive list of examples of how the funds could be used are included in the FAQ. LEAs can use their ESSER funds to support direct costs, including additional staffing to address learning loss or social-emotional and mental health, the purchase of equipment or materials that will enable the unique hands-on learning offered by CTEs while also meeting standards for safe and healthy school operations or other needs identified by the CTEs through their Education Recovery planning process.

Regional CTE centers play a critical role in the delivery of high quality, dynamic, and flexible pathways to graduation (16. V.S.A. §941(b)(3)(C(i))), and are also an effective tool in engaging

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and re-engaging students. CTE will be crucial in the state's economic recovery, and ESSER funds can be used to support that recovery by ensuring continuity of program offerings, expanding the capacity of key programs (e.g. Construction, Electrical, Plumbing, Health Science), expanding the capacity of CTE centers to respond to student's mental health needs, and building and strengthening students' academic and career readiness through math and English instruction and interventions aligned to WorkKeys.

Failure to support regional CTE centers may result in higher CTE tuition rates or limitations on CTE opportunities for students. Either outcome would mean additional stress on education systems that can be avoided. Higher tuition will likely contribute to a cycle of increased tuition, decreased CTE enrollments, and/or cuts in CTE programs that will ultimately be most problematic for smaller high schools who will be unable to provide similar high-quality CTE experiences for students.

Vermont's employers are struggling to find qualified employees to fill good paying jobs. In most areas of the state, CTE centers are contributing to the development of the skilled workforce to fill those jobs.

As you prepare for the coming 2021-2022 academic year, I strongly urge you to work with your regional CTE centers to ensure they have the necessary financial support as we collectively work to support our student's post-pandemic mental health, re-engagement and academic achievement needs.

The Agency of Education's ESSER team, in conjunction with the CTE team, is available to provide technical assistance on allowable uses of ESSER to support our CTE centers.